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Convenience medicine triggers competition [1]

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People working in the healthcare industry are beginning to understand that customer convenience, the top concern in other industries, should have its place in healthcare too. The reason for this is often overlooked. It?s driven by demographics. With ever-growing workforce participation in developed countries, time is becoming more precious ? and so looking after your health is squeezed among other chores. That?s the principal reason why waiting lists for medical treatments are a medieval plague and absolutely counterproductive.

This is where Convenience Medicine kicks in. It?s also the story behind Wal-Mart's recent heavy engagement in healthcare. The world champion of retailers has prodded others [3] to offer most common drugs so cheap that even the Medicare Pharmaceutical Benefit Scheme ? introduced at huge cost by George W. Bush ? is already looking rather obsolete. But it?s not only cheap drugs. Convenience care also offers a different approach to patients. Surveys show an extremely high rate of patient satisfaction with convenient care clinics.

> *Convenience care clinics provide reliable, immediate, low-cost healthcare to the general public, many of whom do not have access to traditional healthcare. With over 500 active clinics in the United States (projected to grow to 700 by the end of 2007), these clinics complement traditional medical services providers.*

With the healthcare industry employing the biggest workforce in many countries and eating up increasingly vast chunks of government budgets, it is unsurprising that market forces are finally getting loose. It always struck me as hypocritical that those who insisted that healthcare was "morally different" were often the same people who shrugged off the industry's deplorable record of customer relations.

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